

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS COLOMBO 442

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TAGS: PINT, PINR, CE

SUBJ: FORMER GOVERNOR-GENERAL GUILTY IN
FOREIGN EXCHANGE CASE

1. SIR OLIVER GOONETILLEKE, FORMER GOVERNOR-GENERAL
OF CEYLON, 1954-1962, HIS DAUGHTER, AND SON-IN-LAW,
AND THREE OTHERS WERE FOUND GUILTY
FEB 4 OF VIOLATIONS OF GSL FOREIGN EXCHANGE
CONTROL LAWS. SIR OLIVER, TRIED IN ABSENTIA, IS
BRITISH SUBJECT CURRENTLY LIVING IN UK. CASE WAS
BASED MAINLY ON LETTERS HE HAD WRITTEN TO HIS
DAUGHTER IN SRI LANKA REFERRING TO BLACK-MARKET
TRANSACTIONS IN RUPEES AND STERLING.

2. ALL SIX CONVICTED WERE TRIED BY TOUGH NEW
SPECIAL COURT, CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION, SET UP
IN 1972 TO DEAL WITH CASES ARISING OUT OF 1971
INSURGENCY AND VIOLATIONS OF
FOREIGN EXCHANGE LAWS.

3. MAIN COUNT ON WHICH SIR OLIVER, SON-IN-LAW AND
DAUGHTER WERE CONVICTED WAS BUYING AND SELLING
FOREIGN CURRENCY TO VALUE OF 300,000 RUPEES.
SIR OLIVER WAS CLEARED OF CHARGES THAT HE ABETTED
FOURTH ACCUSED, A.R.M. MUKHTAR, IN ILLEGAL EXPORT
OF GEMS WORTH 356,000 DOLLARS. MUKHTAR WAS CONVICTED
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FOR ILLEGAL GEM EXPORTS. LAST TWO CONVICTED WERE

MUKHTAR'S SONS WHO HAD PLED GUILTY TO NOT DECLARING
ACQUISITION OF 98 POUNDS STERLING.

4. COURT WILL PASS SENTENCE AFTER HEARING STATEMENTS
IN MITIGATION FROM DEFENSE ATTORNEYS.

5. LONG-RUNNING TRIAL WAS FOLLOWED AVIDLY BY PUBLIC BECAUSE
OF PERSONALITIES INVOLVED. PRESS COVERAGE WAS EXTENSIVE.
VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

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